

Presidio of San Francisco, Post Exchange
(Service Maintenance Shop and Pathological
Crematory) (Building 1065)
Thornburg Road, Letterman Hospital Complex
Golden Gate National Recreation Area
San Francisco
San Francisco County
California

HABS No. CA-2635

HABS
CAL
38-SANFRA,
187-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

**Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Western Region
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California 94107**

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

PRESIDIO OF SAN FRANCISCO, POST EXCHANGE
(Service Maintenance Shop & Pathological Crematory)
(Building 1065)

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Location:

Building 1065 is located at the west end of the industrial complex north of the main hospital, due north of building 1040, at the Presidio of San Francisco, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, in the City and County of San Francisco, California.

U.S.G.S. San Francisco North Quadrangle (7.5), Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 10. 548 340. 4183 825

Significance:

Building 1065 is significant for its long-time association with the hospital post exchange as a motor vehicle garage, and for its function from 1962 to 1982 as the pathological crematory for Letterman. It is a contributing structure to the Presidio of San Francisco's National Historic Landmark district.

Description:

Building 1065 is a one-story, wood frame structure, generally rectangular in plan (108 × 24 feet), with a decorative front in the Spanish Colonial Revival Style. It was built in 1919 as a seven-bay service station with a high bay at the west end and a projecting bay at the east end. It was built for motor vehicles but was modified at the west end for an incinerator (1962) and at the east end for a paint shop (by 1962). It is a wood frame structure on a concrete foundation with walls of square posts and beams in places, and lighter studs elsewhere. The sides, rear, and roof of the building are clad in galvanized, corrugated iron. The shed roof is carried on rafters. The seven bays across the front are framed in beige stucco with vertical piers rising above the roof and articulating each bay. Between the piers is an intermittent red tile coping. The bays must have originally been open or fitted with wood doors. Each bay has been enclosed with horizontal wood siding which incorporates doors of various sizes and types, or windows. The side and rear walls are lit by horizontal bands of six-light wood casement windows. On the rear wall are metal clips near

the eaves that may have held a gutter or pipe, and a large duct from the paint shop at the east end. From the rear a cylindrical electric ventilating fan and a wire cylinder from the incinerator are visible on the roof.

Inside, several partitions divide the space into three non-connecting areas. The three principal partitions appear original except that original passageways through them have been walled off. The three bays at the west end are a single open space where the incinerator once operated. (Outside is a sign reading "Hazardous Noise May Cause Hearing Loss" and inside "Incinerator Operating Instructions" are posted.) Two raised concrete pads indicate the previous location of incinerator equipment. The three central bays ("Paint and Sign Shop") incorporate a toilet and storage room at the west end. The easternmost bay is separated from the rest by a partial partition. Inside this space is a large metal DeVilbiss paint booth. The projecting, easternmost bay of the building is empty except for electrical boxes.

There are concrete floors throughout the building, with floor drains. The building is supplied with electricity, water, sewer, gas, and steam. There are both incandescent and fluorescent light fixtures with wiring that replaced the original knob and tube fixtures.

The building is built on a terrace with a concrete retaining wall just below the rear wall of the building which may be as old or older than the building. It is of concrete construction with a scored stucco surface. At the west side, the terrace is enclosed by a concrete retaining wall that appears to date from after 1970. The area in front of building 1065 is paved in a patchwork of asphalt and concrete.

Historical Context:

According to the Real Property Record Form, building 1065 was built in 1919 at a cost of \$4,000.00. From its appearance it was originally a motor vehicle garage or service station. According to Harrison¹ it

was built for the post exchange. The Post Exchange for Letterman was established in December 1903. By 1919 when this was built, it had "an automobile truck, with a gas and oil station."² During World War II, "for the motorist, a modern service station, completely equipped to service all types of automobiles and supply any need of the motorist, is ready to oblige cheerfully and at minimum prices."³ The Real Property Record prepared after November 1, 1964, and a floor plan drawn October 18, 1970 (after new uses were in the building), referred to the building as the PE (post exchange) Maintenance Shop, indicating a shift from vehicular to general maintenance.

Sometime before May 1961, the east end of the garage was designated as a paint shop. At that time, plans were prepared for installation of an incinerator at the west end for use as a pathological crematory for human and infectious waste. On June 9, 1982, the incinerator failed a test under regulations of the Bay Area Pollution Control District. The incinerator continued to be used for classified documents until 1986 when operation ceased and it was dismantled. On May 28, 1986, it was designated the Exchange Service Station. On May 20, 1988, it became a warehouse where carpets and used furnishings were stored until 1994.

As a garage for motor vehicles, building 1065 was located in an area where stables, a wagon shed, and a "Garage for Motor Ambulances" were all in place by 1915. Facilities serving various hospital transportation needs were developed and maintained in this area from the early days of the hospital until it closed. Building 1065 was one of many built, including building 1066 on its west, which was a much larger building.

The establishment of a crematory at this site in 1962 was at least the second time a crematory had been in this part of the hospital. Maps

of Letterman in 1915 and 1918 show a crematory less than 100 feet away. At that time building 50 housed the crematory.

Endnotes:

1. Laura Harrison, *Historic Buildings of the Presidio*, volume 13. National Park Service, 1993.
2. *Listening Post*, "The History of Letterman General Hospital." Presidio of San Francisco, 1919, p. 50.
3. Foghorn "Post Exchange Supports Many Activities at Letterman." February 14, 1942, p. 2.

Sources:

- A. Architectural drawings, maps and plans:
- Facilities Engineering Department, Presidio of San Francisco. "Building No. T-1065/PE Maint. Shop, Paint Shop" floor plan. October 18, 1970. On file at ARC, file # ADPWEMR-3 B2, folder T-1065.
- Facilities Engineering Office, Presidio of San Francisco. "Repair Contaminated Waste Incinerator." May 1976. Plan on file at ARC Building Drawer.
- National Park Service. "Letterman General Hospital, World War I, 1918." Map 6 prepared by NPS from historic sources. Scale 1"=100'. Illustration in Ervin N. Thompson's *Defender of the Gate: The Presidio of San Francisco, A History 1946-1994*. Draft manuscript at the Presidio Museum, 1994.
- Office of Construction Quartermaster, San Francisco. "Map of the Presidio of San Francisco in two sheets showing water and Fuel Oil Distributing Systems." August 1912. On file at Army Records Center, Historic Map Drawer.
- Office of Construction Quartermaster, San Francisco. "Plan of Proposed Improvements on Roads, Walks, Gutters, Curbs, Drains, etc. Letterman General Hospital, Presidio of San Francisco, Cal." Scale 1"=50'. August 1915. On file at Army Records Center, Historic Map Drawer.
- Office of the Post Engineer. "Steam Cleaning . . . Concrete Floor Slabs." May 1961. Plan on file at ARC Building Drawer.
- Post Engineer Office, Presidio of San Francisco. "Letterman Army Hospital Area, Resurfacing Roadways and Parking Areas," ca. 1959. On file at Army Record Center, Historic Map Drawer.

- B. Historic Views: None found.

C. Interviews:

Finney, John, at Letterman since 1979. Telephone interview with Michael Corbett May 4, 1995.

Hansen, Richard, NPS; at PSF since 1988. Telephone interview with Michael Corbett May 4, 1995.

D. Bibliography:

Alley, Paul and Leo R. Barker, Gordon Chappell, Carey Feierabend, John P. Langellier, David Quiteris, and Sally A. Dean. "Presidio of San Francisco National Historic Landmark District," National Register of Historic Places - Registration Form. Submitted October 16, 1992; signed by the Keeper May 25, 1993.

Fog Horn. "Post Exchange Supports Many Activities at Letterman." February 14, 1942, p. 2.

Harrison, Laura Soullière. *Historic Buildings of the Presidio, Physical History Report*, volume 13 (Buildings 1061-1208). Binders of text and photographs. Denver Service Center: The National Park Service, 1993.

Listening Post. "The History of Letterman General Hospital." Presidio of San Francisco: 1919, p. 50.

U.S. Army, Real Property Record, DA Form 2877 (1 Nov. 1964). File on Building 1065 at ARC, ADPWEM R-5, B3.

Building 1065. Building file at ARC, ADPWEMR-3 Box 2.

Building 1065. Building file at ARC, ADPWEMR-5 Box 3.

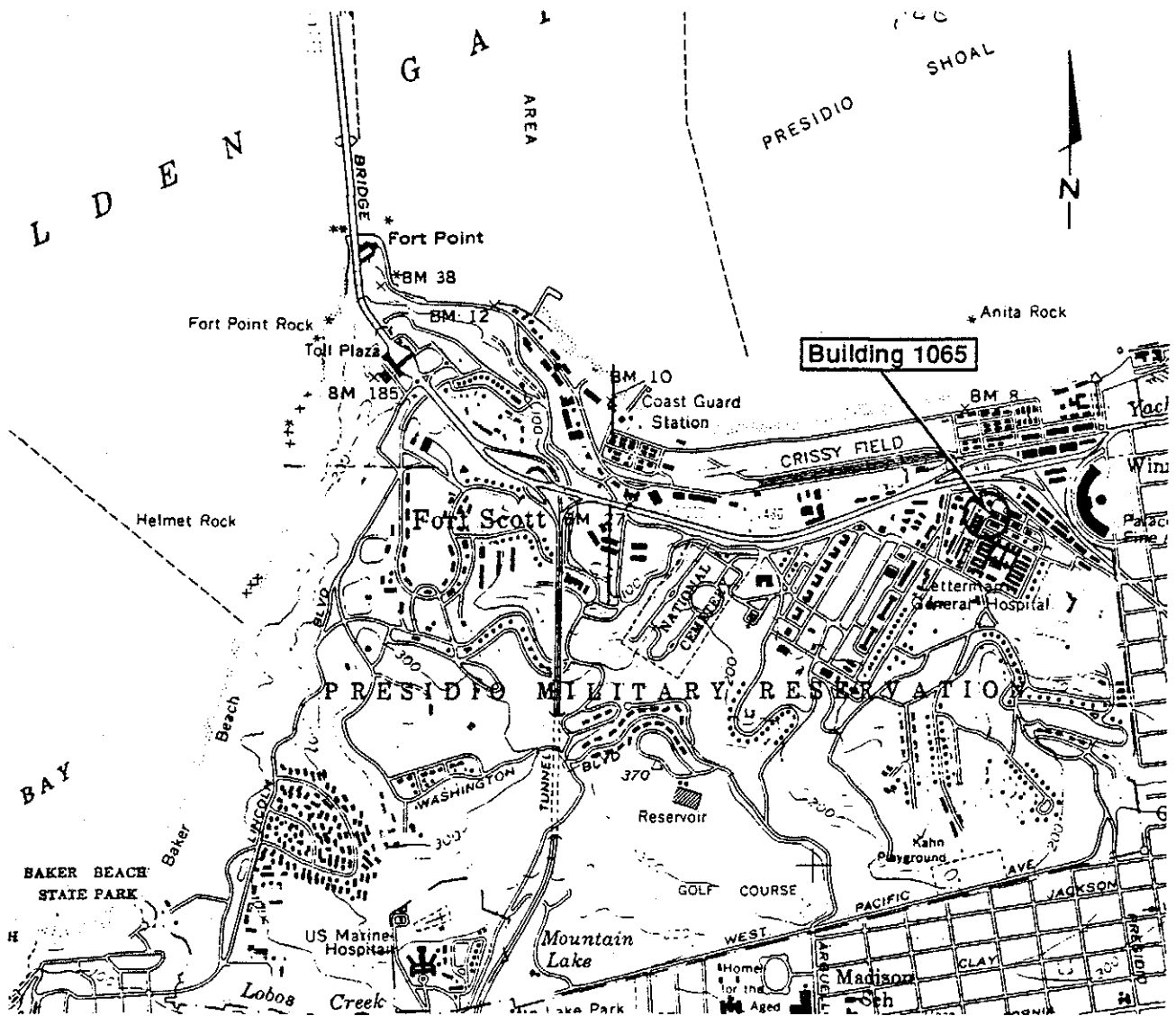
Vieyra, Daniel I. *"Fill 'er Up," An Architectural History of America's Gas Stations*. New York and London: Collier Books, 1979.

- E. Like sources not yet investigated: Quartermaster Corps Form 117 at the Presidio Army Museum, cited in Harrison, could not be located for this report. Harrison calls this the Post Exchange Service Station Maintenance Shop, but it is ambiguous from records now available (but not seen by Harrison) whether this was associated with the post exchange except around the years 1964 to 1970 and 1982 to 1988. For this report, Harrison's identification of the building (which may be based on the missing form 117) is used, but additional research may show that the early history of the building was not associated with the post exchange.

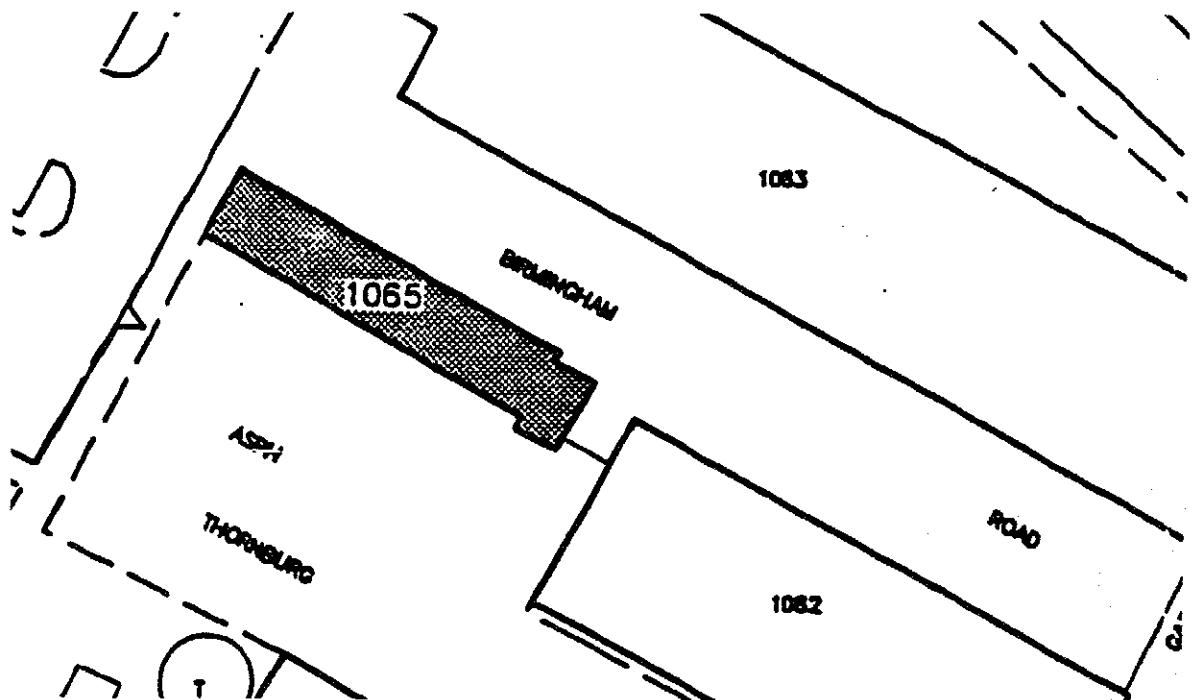
Project Information: Building 1065 is part of the Letterman Complex Planning Area, as identified in the *Final General Management Plan Amendment*

(FGMPA) (July 1994). The demolition of Building 1065 is in accordance with the preferred alternative identified for the Letterman Complex Planning Area in the *FGMPA Environmental Impact Statement* (July 1994). The Programmatic Agreement for the FGMPA Environmental Impact Statement stipulates Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) documentation as a mitigation measure for the adverse effects resulting from the demolition of Building 1065. This report is part of the HABS documentation and was prepared by Michael R. Corbett, architectural historian, Dames & Moore, San Francisco, in May 1995.

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SCALE OF FEET

PRESIDIO OF SAN FRANCISCO, POST EXCHANGE
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